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Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Statement for the Record
Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 12)
January 9, 2009

Betty McCollum
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Ms. McCOLLUM: Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the *Paycheck Fairness Act* (H.R. 12), which addresses gender-based wage discrimination. This is a historic day in the fight for equal rights for women, and I would like to thank Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House leaders for making pay equity for women among the first votes in the 111th Congress.

Families are struggling with the current economic crisis, making it more important than ever that women, who are often the head of the household and make up nearly half the workforce, are compensated fairly and equitably. Leading the legislative session with measures to reverse gender-based wage bias is a clear signal of the level of commitment American families can expect from this Congress.

The disastrous economic policies of the Bush administration failed to address major workforce equity issues over the last eight years. It is unacceptable that on average, women only make 78 cents for every dollar earned by a man, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That could mean a difference of \$400,000 to \$2 million over a lifetime in lost wages. Furthermore, the wage disparity grows wider as women age and threatens their economic security, retirement, and quality of life. The new Congress and the incoming Administration must act quickly to protect America's workers from wage-discrimination.

The *Paycheck Fairness Act* seeks to level the playing field between men and women. This bill will strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and close the loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid responsibility for discriminatory pay. The bill will give women the same access to recover back pay and damages as victims of other types of pay discrimination. Furthermore, it protects employees who discuss pay information from retaliation by their employers and does not allow courts to accept poor excuses for unfair pay practices.

There is no question that our top priority is to get Americans and our economy working again. The *Paycheck Fairness Act* recognizes that equal pay is not only an issue of fairness for women, but also one of fairness for working families. In these tough economic times, this bill could make all the difference for working families to make ends meet in their everyday lives. Through these efforts we can help give families the resources they need to give their children a better future. Pay equity should not be a benefit that needs to be bargained for, it is a promise that the government must ensure.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill to ensure economic security for women, their families, and our communities. Through this legislation we can ensure a better future for our daughters, granddaughters, and generations to come.